Lowland Leopard Frog

Rana yavapaiensis
Family Ranidae

Global Rank: G4
State Rank: SH (UT); S1 (NM); S2 (CA); S4 (AZ)

Distribution: Found in the Colorado River drainage from the Virgin River in extreme northwestern Arizona and southwestern Utah to the Hoover Dam area to Yuma area in Arizona and extreme southeastern California, to the mouth of the Colorado River in Mexico, eastward through central and southeastern Arizona, dipping into Sonora, Mexico, and extreme southwestern New Mexico. Occurs from near sea level to around 4,800 ft. (1,460 m.) in elevation.

Current range of the lowland leopard frog

Description: Adults reach around 5 1/2 in. (13.5 cm.) in snout-vent length. Colorations are tan, gray-brown, or light gray-green to green above, and yellow below. They have dorsolateral folds, tuberculate skin, and usually vague upper lip stripes. Chins are mottled in older individuals. There is a dark network on the rear of the thighs, and yellow groin color often extends to the rear of the belly and underside of legs. Adult males have swollen and darkened thumb bases. The voice is low, guttural, chuckle like, at a fast repeating rate.

Reproduction: There appears to be both a spring and fall breeding season peak. Egg masses and newly hatched tadpoles have been found in late February to late April. Tadpoles have sparse, discrete, small dark blotches on the tail, and the tail is 50 to 65 percent of the body length. Metamorphosis occurs after the tadpoles reach a little over 1 in. (3 cm.) in length.

Food: Unknown, but they probably eat a wide variety of insects and other invertebrates.

Habits: The frogs frequent desert, grassland, oak, and oak-pine woodland habitats, entering the permanent pools of foothills, overflow ponds and side channels of major rivers, permanent springs, and, in drier areas, more or less permanent stock ponds. Usually stay close to water.

Management Implications: Also known as the Yavapai leopard frog. It has undergone a status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is classified as endangered by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Populations would be especially susceptible to events such as severe floods and droughts.

Important References: Stebbins, R.C. 1985. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. The Peterson Field Guide Series. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY; Degenhardt, W.G., C.W. Painter, and A.H. Price. 1996. Amphibians and reptiles of New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM.